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ABSTRACT

The concern for accountability in New Zealand universities is discussed in terms of policy making. Several questions are addressed: What is the nature of accountability? How does it originate? What is the manner of its growth? What is its effect upon the university's character and functioning? What is meant by academic freedom? Why do academics regard it so highly? It is concluded that academic freedom and university autonomy are indispensable to the well-being of a liberal democratic society. The university, as a part of such a society, must use its freedom and autonomy in a responsible manner. The problem becomes one of mutual understanding and trust. What disturbs academics at the present time is the apparent lack of understanding of academic freedom with a consequent lack of faith and trust in the universities. Such freedom is seen as a necessary condition of the highest efficiency and the proper progress of academic institutions, and encroachments upon their liberty would diminish their efficiency and hinder their development. (LBH)

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Accountability or Autonomy in the Universities?

A. E. Fieldhouse

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SOME INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

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FOR MANY REASONS UNIVERSITIES ARE TODAY UNDERGOING radical changes. In the British tradition the university has been a community of scholars devoted to teaching and research, a small institution relatively remote from the concerns of everyday life and consequently often misunderstood to be pursuing only 'useless' knowledge, its student body as much a social as an intellectual elite, an institution that was financially independent or largely so. With such a character and function a university could be autonomous and, generally speaking, academic freedom could be a reality. Indeed these qualities of autonomy and academic freedom came, in this tradition, to be regarded by academics and others as among the essential and distinguishing characteristics that define a university.

Today, however, universities in this tradition find that their character and functions have radically changed in many important respects. As well they are now becoming painfully aware that some of these changes have led, gradually and insidiously over a period of time, to a limiting of their traditional qualities of autonomy and academic freedom. Indeed few, if any, universities do not now find themselves required to account in some way for some of their activities to outside agencies of some kind. Imperceptibly but steadily the extent to which this has occurred has grown. And as this accountability has increased, autonomy has necessarily diminished. So much is this so that there are now solid grounds for the anxious concern, evident in universities throughout the English speaking world, over the extent to which accountability is making inroads into the traditional autonomy of the university—a concern that if accountability grows it will inevitably change the character of the university and make impossible the fulfilment of some of the functions which are unique to the university. Should this occur then, it is believed, the quality of society will ultimately be adversely affected.

Are these concerns well grounded? May they not be a figment of the fancy of conservative academics fighting to retain a

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privileged, sheltered existence? Do we need to be concerned about accountability in New Zealand universities? If so, what should guide our policies regarding the nature and the extent of the accountability that might reasonably and safely be required of our universities?

Before such questions can be satisfactorily answered, the answers to other questions must be found. What is the nature of accountability? How does it originate? What is the manner of its growth? What is its effect upon the university's character and functioning? What, precisely, is meant by academic freedom? Why do academics regard it so highly?

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

In its most common form accountability is required in respect of finance. A university, in return for money given to it to finance its activities, is required to account to the donor in some way for the spending of that money. It may be that the university has to show the donor that 'value' is being obtained for the money. Or accountability may take the form of agreement to conditions regarding the spending of the money before it is made available. In some countries, however, accountability in education now goes beyond the expenditure of money to other matters such as the quality of educational facilities, the quality of the teaching, the achievement of those taught, the implementation of educational policies and programmes. Furthermore accountability is now being required not only of universities but of almost all types of educational institutions from nursery school to university.

Another newly developing aspect of accountability is to be seen in the growing range of those seeking accountability from educational institutions. No longer is accountability asked for only by those dispensing public money for education. Both parents and students are now asking the educational institutions with which they are concerned to give some account of their practices. Evidence of this is seen in the activities of various parents' organisations in this country, and in the development of student protest in our secondary schools. In their protests against such matters as corporal punishment and authoritarianism in the secondary schools the students are, in effect, calling on their

schools to account to them in these particular respects. In the United States this form of accountability—the pupils demanding that the school should account to them—has in some instances gone to the extreme of the pupils moving out of the existing schools and setting up their own. In Milwaukee, Palo Alto (California), Syracuse, Rochester and Cortland (New York), and Washington (D.C.) this has occurred; and the educational authorities are in a quandary as to prosecuting the pupils for absence from school. The much publicised revolts and protests on university campuses overseas are in many instances the manifestation, at the tertiary level, of this same recent phenomenon, of the students demanding accountability from the educational institutions they are attending.

There has, however, been yet another recent development in accountability in education that is of great interest and significance. In the past accountability has been required only of educational institutions. Now, however, the tables are being turned and the dispensers of public money, those who first exacted accountability from others, are now finding that accountability is being required from them. A local instance of this is to be seen in the flood of petitions to the New Zealand House of Representatives, during 1970, praying for an increase in the vote for education. By this means the petitioners are, in effect, holding the government to account. Education Boards are similarly being held to account by anxious and often angry parents who call meetings to demand the improvement or replacement of the state school buildings provided for their children.

From the above observations a number of conclusions can be drawn about the present nature of accountability in education. Firstly, it has now developed many different forms. It is concerned today not only with money but, as well, with such matters as the educational quality of the institutions and their programmes, with the quality of educational facilities such as buildings, with the implementation of educational policies. Secondly, accountability is now being sought not only by the dispensers of public money for education but also by parents and students. Thirdly, accountability is not only being sought now from the educational institutions alone, as originally occurred, but also from the dispensers of public money for education, such as government

and Education Boards. Fourthly, accountability is by no means restricted to universities but in some form may be sought from educational institutions at all levels. Finally, accountability seeks to direct; and it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish it from some degree of control.

Accountability is, then, assuming many forms and is clearly becoming widespread in education. No provider of educational facilities and programmes can be certain of not being subjected to accountability in some form or other. Moreover it seems likely that accountability has come to stay. How then does it develop? What causes it to develop? An examination of the development of accountability in British universities will help to answer these questions.

THE GROWTH OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE BRITISH UNIVERSITIES

Accountability in the British universities has arisen in respect of finance; but those who are alarmed at the progressive tightening of the screw of accountability that is occurring consider that accountability for money is now involving and leading to control of matters such as courses to be taught, staff appointments, entrance qualifications, use of buildings and facilities. An examination of the trend of events suggests there is some reason for such alarm.

In 1919 the possibility of undue repressive accountability was foreseen and led to the establishment of the University Grants Committee. For a variety of reasons an expansion of the universities was occurring at that time which the universities could not meet out of their existing financial resources. Furthermore the national need to promote research, especially scientific research, was leading to greatly increased state support of the universities. Accordingly the University Grants Committee was created to be a buffer between the state and the universities. Its terms of reference, laid down in a Treasury minute, defined its function as being to 'inquire into the financial needs of University education in the United Kingdom and to advise the Government as to the application of any grants that may be made by Parliament towards meeting them.'

In commenting on the advantageous nature of this buffer concept to both parties at that time, the Committee has recently stated: 'It relieved the Government of assuming direct responsibility for the universities, and it safeguarded the universities from political interference. More positively, it was an earnest of the Government's willingness to provide money for the universities "without strings", and it enabled the universities to enjoy public funds without the fear that the gift might turn out to be a Greek one.'[1]

However the above mentioned willingness of successive governments seems to have weakened over the years until, in 1952, the following words were added to the Committee's terms of reference: 'to collect, examine and make available information related to university education throughout the United Kingdom and to assist, in consultation with the universities and other bodies concerned, the preparation and execution of such plans for the development of the universities as may from time to time be required in order to ensure that they are fully adequate to national needs.' The reference to the developing of the universities according to national needs indicated a trend away from the Committee's original role of buffer towards one of manager or director. Moreover it implied that the universities' former cherished state of academic freedom and independence was in question.

In 1964 the transfer of ministerial responsibility for the universities, via the UGC, from Treasury to the newly created Department of Education and Science (DES) suggested, for various reasons, a further increase of accountability and a further decrease in academic freedom and autonomy. From its inception in 1919 the UGC had been responsible to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and UGC staff had consisted of former Treasury civil servants. This had been advantageous since the latter had brought with them to the UGC not only first hand knowledge of Treasury procedures and principles but also personal knowledge of the particular Treasury officials with whom they negotiated from their current positions as UGC staff.

Amongst the many reasons for the transfer to the DES two are

1 UGC Report, *University Development 1962-67*, Cmnd 3820, HMSO, London, 1968, para. 554

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of special significance. Firstly, the government expenditure on universities had by that date grown to such size that Treasury was placed in an ambivalent position. In its primary function Treasury found itself having to scrutinize most stringently the very proposals for large grants for universities for which it also had to plead the case. Secondly, it was administratively tidy to bring responsibility for all aspects of education into one Ministry. However, certain aspects of the DES did not augur well for the preservation of the academic freedom of the universities, and these aspects are of great importance in the further development of accountability.

The DES had been created out of the former Ministry of Education and had retained the latter's chief functions. One of these functions, as stated in the 1944 Act which created the Ministry, was 'to secure the effective execution by local authorities, under his (the Minister's) control and direction, of the national policy for providing a varied and comprehensive educational service in every area.' Accordingly the Ministry had, for twenty years, been an educational policeman, ensuring that local education authorities were conforming to a national educational policy laid down by government, and armed with the authority to do so. It is not surprising that the transfer of universities, accustomed to managing their own financial affairs, to a Ministry experienced in administering a national policy and accustomed to functioning in the controlling way described above, indicated but one further step in the exacting of accountability from the universities. Moreover by the time the Ministry came to be transformed into the DES it had apparently gathered such strength in its controlling and direction of education as to cause concern in other quarters than universities over what were regarded as its bureaucratic and somewhat dictatorial actions. Thus one observer was prompted to remark at that time: 'Both the teachers' organizations and the local authorities have been saying for some months now that the Ministry is acting more arbitrarily and more autocratically than they have been used to.'[2]

As might be expected there was general opposition from the universities to the transfer to the DES, to a Minister with statutory

2 Burgess, T.: 'The Ministry of Education,' *New Society*, 12 Sept. 1963, p.13

obligations, and to a department not accustomed to dealing with autonomous institutions each pursuing its own particular purpose in its own way. Obviously the transfer could only lead, the universities concluded, to still further inroads into their academic freedom and autonomy.[3]

By 1966 concern over accountability had developed to such an extent that the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr. Anthony Crosland, spoke in the House of Commons of 'a wavering of confidence—some people would even say a crisis of confidence' in the universities, but at the same time observing that 'public opinion is unusually ready to display a certain impatience with the universities.'[4] In his speech, the very length of which perhaps testifies to the importance attached to its subject, the Minister did little if indeed anything to reassure those who saw the socially and nationally indispensable benefits of the autonomy of the universities as being sacrificed to the achievement of greater accountability. For every profession of the importance of protecting academic freedom there was, at some stage of the speech, a statement of the importance of control and direction of the universities. Thus, early in the speech came this reassurance. 'Let me make a clear declaration of faith, which I think will be echoed in all parts of the House, that we respect and treasure the essential academic liberties as much in 1966 as ever we did before. We have surely all of us learned if we needed to, the lessons of Lysenko in Soviet Russia and McCarthyism in the United States, and we all equally want to preserve the central university tradition of freedom, heterodoxy and dissent.'[5] But no clear indication was given of how these 'essential academic liberties' and the 'central university tradition of freedom, heterodoxy and dissent' were to be reconciled with the control and the direction of the universities the Minister at the same time accepted and justified. Control of the universities' spending of public money (defined no more precisely than as a 'reasonable degree of

3 Allowing that only the universities could assess the extent to which these fears have been justified the UGC reported, three years later, that its connection with the DES 'has in no sense introduced politics, still less Party politics, into our activities.' *University Development 1962-1967*, Cmnd. 3820, HMSO. 1968, para. 585.

4 Parliamentary Debates, vol.723, 1965-66, 236 5 *Ibid.*, 243

control,' and without indication of its reasonableness to whom), 'rationalisation of courses and concentration of effort,' efficient use of plant, were amongst the means of directing and controlling the universities the Minister apparently considered as not seriously diminishing the essential academic liberties he professed to accept and to defend. Most disturbing to the critics of accountability, however, were the references the Minister made to manpower surveys when discussing the expansion of higher education. Having stated he did not want to imply 'that the sole criterion for the expansion of higher education should be national needs'[6] the Minister later declared: 'At the moment we try to make projections and predictions for particular groups, such as teachers and doctors, but there is no machinery for surveying the wider fields of non-scientific national demand or need.' And he disclosed that he was currently discussing with the First Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Exchequer 'what the next steps might be in formulating a wider manpower policy on these lines.'[7] This could not but mean the serious consideration of 'social engineering' on a national scale with the likely consequence of the directing of students into specified courses in universities rigidly controlled in their very nature and functions. Such has not, of course, come to pass, whether or not the reason may be provided by the departure of Mr. Crosland, and somewhat later of his party, from office.

Mr. Crosland's ambivalence continued throughout his speech to his closing remark: 'On the one hand, we must reassure the universities that we believe profoundly in their freedom and in their expansion. On the other hand, we must reassure the taxpayer and Parliamentary opinion that the nation receives full value for this large expenditure.'[8] By seeking 'full value' only in such terms as money and national needs—with the consequential controlling and directing of the universities—but not in terms of the unique values the 'essential academic liberties' make possible the Minister, whether unwittingly or not, advanced the degree of accountability still further, as subsequent events show.

The following year, 1967, the government decided, without consulting the universities, to raise the fees of overseas students.

6 *Ibid.*, 252 7 *Ibid.*, 253, 254 8 *Ibid.*, 256

Such unilateral action in a matter in which the universities were most intimately concerned did not dispel the growing fears for academic independence and freedom. Nor did the tenor of debates in the House of Commons. Since charters for new universities were being drafted at that time some members took the opportunity to discuss the provisions of such charters.[9] In effect the main suggestions called the universities to account for the quality of their teaching and of their examining, for their methods of disciplining students, and for their involving of students in university government. Charters should give some protection from 'slipshod, inaccurate, dog-eared, mumbled types of lectures which show no preparation whatever'. There should be some protection from irregularities in the conduct of examinations; there should be provision in charters for the active participation of students in the running of the universities, and 'at the highest level'; there should be explicitly stated in charters a code of discipline such as that proposed by the National Union of Students. Whether or not the views expressed were representative of those of the members as a whole, they indicated that some members were interested in accountability that went beyond finance. Indeed one member warned: 'There is a danger in the British community in treating the universities as we constantly do, as a totally special and isolated element in our institutional structure for higher learning.'

In 1967 also the appearance of a document issued by the UGC and tactfully described as a 'Memorandum of General Guidance'[10] indicated the further widening of accountability. It was, in fact, the first statement the UGC had ever circulated to the universities of the way it thought university education should be developed. Although the term 'general guidance' was used in its title there was some reason for suspecting it would lead to rather more direction and greater accountability than in the past.

The Memorandum set out 'the general background of the Committee's thinking against which individual grant allocations [to universities] had been made. Attention was called to such overall considerations as student numbers, unit costs, and national

9 *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.747, 1966-7, 578-582

10 *University Development*, 1962-1967, Cmnd 3820, 1968 Appendix 12

needs, as well as to consequences, for universities' planning, of the need for collaboration with industry, the pattern of postgraduate studies and the application of these generalities to particular fields of study.'[11] The admitted use of this Memorandum by the Committee in making decisions on grants to individual universities strongly suggested that in practice its effect would go beyond that of guidance and indicated that, willingly or not, the Committee had now moved much further towards the role of manager.

The Committee was, however, at great pains to allay disquiet. It declared that in the recent quinquennial visitations, as distinct from earlier ones, universities had actually asked for such guidance. At great length it was explained that such guidance was necessary owing to the sheer number of universities, to their increasing differences, to the danger of uneconomic duplication and, above all, to national needs. And the Committee protested, almost too anxiously, that the Memorandum was not an expression of inflexible direction. Defensively the Committee declared that 'the important thing is not total agreement with each of the Committee's conclusions but rather the acceptance by the universities of the proposition that it is right and proper that the Committee should so convey to universities its own thinking and conclusions.'[12] 'This is not to say that the Committee aspires, still less that it should rightly aspire, to a detailed planning of each university's development or to a detailed oversight of such planning. But it is to say that in the increasing complexity of university affairs there should somewhere be a broad strategic picture. And it is today regarded as the Committee's responsibility to sketch that picture.'[13] Such explanations did not, however, dispose of the associating of the 'thinking' in the Memorandum with the making of decisions on grants to individual universities.

A further sign of the times occurred in 1967 when the Government relieved the UGC of its major involvement in the determination of academic salaries by requiring the Prices and Incomes Board to keep academic salaries under continuous review. The implications of this decision gave reasonable cause for real alarm.

11 *Ibid.*, para.567 12 *Ibid.*, para.567 13 *Ibid.*, para.568

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Not only did it lead to a further whittling down of the UGC's functions and of the universities' independence but also it meant the direct introduction into university affairs of a government agency. Furthermore, that agency was beyond the control of the UGC and the DES. Since academic salaries are inevitably related most intimately to academic career structures and promotions it could reasonably be concluded that the latter would now be determined, even if indirectly, by the Prices and Incomes Board and not the UGC. The Government declared such would not occur, and that the UGC was not to be replaced by the Prices and Incomes Board in matters of academic career structure generally. The UGC, however, was less certain. 'It is too early to say how such matters will be dealt with, but it may well be that the Committee will still have a role to play in the salary field, as advisers to the Government on university matters generally and as the normal agency for consultations with the universities.'[14]

But of all the events of 1967 that alarmed the opponents of university accountability, the most disturbing was the announcement by the Secretary of State for Education and Science that from 1st January, 1968, the grants to the universities would be conditional upon their books and records being opened to the scrutiny of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The records of the UGC were to be similarly opened.[15] In this decision the government was accepting the unanimous recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons which had been instructed to report on the exemption of the universities from the orbit of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C & AG).[16]

The magnitude of the increase in the annual government grants to universities, from £4.3 millions in 1945-46 to an estimated £211.0 millions in 1966-67, had greatly strengthened the case of those who had been pressing for some time for the C & AG to be given independent access to, and inspection of, the universities' books. The call for an independent check to ensure that value for money of this order was being obtained was not lightly to be dismissed.

14 *Ibid.*, para.43 15 *Parliamentary Debates*, vol.751, 1966-67, 749
16 *Parliament and Control of University Expenditure*, Special Report from the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 1966-67, H.C.290, HMSO, London, 1967

Successive Committees of Public Accounts had, for some fifteen years, expressed concern that government expenditure on the universities had been exempted from the regular parliamentary practice that required independent access for the C & AG to the financial records of any organisation which derived the major part of its income from parliamentary grants. Furthermore the universities were particularly vulnerable on this count since they constituted the sole exception to the general rule. However, university moneys had always been accounted for, not only through the universities having their accounts professionally audited, but also through the C & AG being able to obtain information he might need. The custom had been for an Accounting Officer (in the Ministry, or Department, with which the UGC was at the time associated) to secure for the C & AG any information he requested about the expenditure of the moneys that had been voted for university purposes; but the C & AG had never had direct access to the books and records.

In conducting its inquiry the Committee took the view that the onus of the argument would lie on those who maintained that the present practice of excepting the university from the general rule should be continued, not on those who opposed its being continued. This was justified on the ground that if the present practices were shown to be working well, that was no guarantee that they would continue to work well in the future.

In the main the evidence of those opposed to the opening of the university's books to the C & AG related to three principal respects in which they considered there would be serious and damaging consequential effects from so doing—in respect of academic freedom, of the authority and prestige of the UGC, and of the extending of the control of university activity by the UGC, DES, and Parliament.

The fears concerning the consequential effects on academic freedom centred around the conviction that the C & AG would inevitably be involved in making *value* judgments and judgments of *academic policy*. Thus, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals stated in its submission: 'We are not thinking here of the effects of regular professional audit, which the Comptroller and Auditor General does not wish to duplicate. We are thinking rather of the approach indicated in his Memorandum (paragraph

6) according to which he would satisfy himself by independent check that value for money was obtained.

'The Comptroller and Auditor General's analysis of the expenditure of universities on those lines would well throw up instances where, we submit, economy and value could not be assessed except in relation to the whole academic picture. This is the kind of assessment which requires expert knowledge of university work—the kind of knowledge the University Grants Committee, constituted as it is was designed to supply.'[17]

Witnesses repeatedly returned to this theme, but as often as they did the C & AG declared it was not part of his duty to question policy decisions, or to express opinions on matters of academic policy, in relation to any field of university expenditure he might examine. He would be concerned, he maintained, only with the efficiency of procedures and controls. He cited his examination of the records of hospital authorities, of the Arts Council, and of the British Academy, among others, as giving no evidence of a consequential inhibiting of their professional freedom. But, as Lord Robbins pointed out in respect of the British Academy, the functions of those organisations were not controversial in the sense that the functions of universities are.[18]

Whilst firmly adhering to his belief that he would not be questioning policy decisions the C & AG did admit that 'there certainly is a real difficulty—I am not denying this—which I and any Comptroller and Auditor General would experience in deciding just where the policy content of a particular problem is really the genuine explanation.' Whilst some instances would be clear one way or the other 'there will be a grey area in the middle where there will have to be an exercise of judgment by the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff as to whether this is the sort of thing which is in his purview and in the purview of this Committee, or whether it is something which neither he nor they should go into as being a question of policy.'[19] Members of the Committee considered that such difficulties could be overcome by the establishment of "conventions" as to what would, and would not, fall within the purview of the C & AG. These reassurances were not, however, convincing and

17 *Ibid.*, Appendix 8, para. 13 and 14. 18 *Ibid.*, Q937 19 *Ibid.*, Q1170

the weight of academic opinion was well expressed by Lord Robbins: 'I personally find it extremely difficult to believe that, with the best will in the world, the Comptroller and Auditor General could avoid becoming involved in judgments of value and question of policy if he were to undertake this particular function.'[20]

Critics saw academic control of university affairs infringed in two other respects. If the C & AG were to inspect the universities' books to see if value for money was being obtained the balance between the administration and the academics, in the universities, would be upset. Greater pressure would be put on the administration with an inevitable decreasing of the responsibility of academics in policy and decision making.[21]

A further infringement of academic control of university affairs was seen in the reference of the C & AG to the possibility of his comparing the cost in various universities for the same matters.[22] The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals commented: 'This approach implies that activities with similar purposes ought to incur similar costs. It is an implication dangerous to universities. In the sphere of undergraduate teaching differences in setting and in the approach and methods of individual university teachers can and should give rise to differences in cost. In post-graduate teaching and in research there are more and greater differences. The three activities are so interlocked that separate costing is technically uncertain, but even if that were successfully accomplished, the application of a mainly statistical and accounting approach could lead straight to the suppression of diversity and independence in academic development.'[23] The fundamental accounting of the universities to Parliament would be best rendered, it was maintained, 'through the interpretative mechanism of the University Grants Committee.'[24]

The belief that the authority and prestige of the UGC would be diminished by the proposed activities of the C & AG was a second danger frequently described by witnesses. The UGC itself

20 *Ibid.*, Q937 21 *Ibid.*, Q782

22 *Ibid.*, Appendix, *Memorandum of the Comptroller and Auditor General*, para. 10

23 *Ibid.*, Appendix 8, para. 15 24 *Ibid.*, Appendix 8, para. 19

expressed this belief.[25] Lord Murray, who had been chairman of the UGC from 1953 to 1963, stated: 'If you did get a body of people coming in, or one person coming in, looking at how the University Grants Committee worked in its allocations, I think it would have rather adverse effects . . . If they did come in they would be almost bound to look into this question of allocations, the Government having determined the global grant for the universities; then if they started to look into the bases on which this was distributed among the universities they would get into a very embarrassing field.' The responsibility of the members of the UGC would be eroded. 'As questions got asked, I think the status of the University Grants Committee, in relation to the universities would suffer.'[26]

Since the UGC had been specifically set up to give the government informed advice, from people of standing and active engagement in university teaching and research, in other forms of education, in the professions, in industry, and in similar related interests, there seemed good reason for the argument that the UGC was, in fact, the best agency from which parliament could obtain assurance that value was being had for its money. Moreover the UGC had always stressed the importance of itself and the universities spending public funds with propriety, economy, and efficiency. Thus in the introduction to the first edition of its *Notes of Procedure*, published in 1963, the Committee commented on excepting financial assistance to the universities from the scrutiny of the C and AG, and went on to say: 'It is recognised by the University Grants Committee that this privileged position entails a specially heavy responsibility upon them to ensure that public funds are used to the best advantage. The universities recognise the same obligations.'[27] Nonetheless this responsibility was to be transferred to the C & AG in the interests of 'an independent check' and, despite protestations to the contrary, suggested a lack of confidence in the UGC and a diminishing of its authority and prestige.

The third main point made by witnesses opposed to the opening of university expenditure to the scrutiny of the C & AG was that

25 *Ibid.*, 1044-5 26 *Ibid.*, Q771 27 University Grants Committee, *Notes on Procedure*, HMSO, London, 1963, para. 7

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it would lead to a further extension of control over the university by the UGC, the DES, and Parliament. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals considered that the access of the C & AG to the universities' books 'could not fail to have as a consequence an increase in detailed departmental control.' It would import 'a further tier of financial supervision.' And the C & AG's views and criticisms would 'necessarily be directed at the department which accounts to Parliament for the grants to universities. The department, in order to discharge its responsibility, would find itself increasingly drawn into detailed inquiry and control of university expenditure.'[28] Lord Murray expressed a similar view: 'If the Comptroller and Auditor General had access to the books of the universities it would mean that the Department which was responsible for the universities would also have to go into the universities.'[29] The DES itself confirmed this view stating that it might feel obliged to have equal access to the UGC's and universities' books with the C & AG, and that would alter the present relationship of the universities, UGC, and DES.[30] Sir John Wolfenden, chairman of the UGC, was of the opinion that examination and investigation by the C & AG would affect the nature of the relationships between the universities, the UGC, and the DES.

Whilst a few academics saw no danger in the C & AG's inspection of university books, the weight of academic opinion was firmly to the contrary and was centred on the three disadvantages described above. The academic critics were careful to point out that they accepted the right of Parliament to be assured that public money was being expended in the universities with propriety, economy, and efficiency. What was at issue was the way this should be done; and, above all, that such accountability should not become control in respect of academic policy.

The efforts of the critics did not prevail. Whilst admitting that the critics' fears were genuinely and widely felt the Committee considered that they were due to misapprehensions which could and should be removed. This could be done it maintained, by the working out of procedural conventions as to how the C &

28 *Parliament and Control of University Expenditure*, Appendix 8, para. 6
29 *Ibid.*, Q780 30 *Ibid.*, Q1161

AG would conduct his scrutiny and handle his enquiries. And so, as from 1st January, 1968, the grants to the universities were made conditional upon their books, and the records of the UGC, being opened to the C & AG.

Whether the predictions of disadvantageous effects upon the universities will be fulfilled will not be known for some time. The UGC, in its annual survey for the 1968-1969 academic year, reported that the C & AG's officers had visited six universities and several institutions of the University of London as a result of which a memorandum had been prepared summarising comments and observations of general interest arising from those visits. 'The broad headings covered in the memorandum were purchasing procedures, repayment services, tuition fees, and the recording and custody of equipment and stores. Apart from these general suggestions, officers of the Exchequer and Audit Department have formally raised a small number of specific questions with individual universities and with the Committee. After considering the replies to these questions the Comptroller and Auditor General may, if he so decides, include any of them in his Report to Parliament.'[31] Apart from the effect produced by the enquiries and decisions the C & AG may make about particular matters there must also be taken into account the more subtle effect of the climate created thereby upon university function, an effect much more difficult to identify and record.

In September of 1969, a Minister of State at the DES (Mrs Shirley Williams) published thirteen suggestions for university development in the next decade. They included an increase in the staff-student ratio, a six-term academic year, a 'quickie' two-year degree, student loans instead of grants and bursaries. All the suggestions related to matters that the universities would have expected to negotiate with, and through, the UGC; and the 'buffer' principle had evidently been ignored. The origin of the suggestions in the DES fulfilled the pessimistic prophesies of those who had forecast that the transfer of the UGC to a 'policy' department like the DES would inevitably mean the intervention of politics into university development.

31 *University Grants Committee Annual Survey*, Academic Year 1968-1969, Cmnd 4261, HMSO, London, 1971, para. 74.

Not surprisingly the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, the Association of University Teachers, and the National Union of Students rejected all the proposals. At an education conference in York Mr. Gerald Fowler, who had succeeded Mrs. Williams, reacted by describing the vice-chancellors as 'behaving in a rather silly way.' Academics were, he said 'hypersensitive', and he warned that 'they may fall into the trap of neglecting the interests of other members of society, not least the interests of those who pay the piper but rarely seek to call the tune—the taxpayers. The suggestion that the academic is quite alone and quite unique in society seems to me singularly absurd.'[32]

The trend of events in the fifty years from 1919 to 1969, chronicled above, is clear. The universities have lost a form of accountability by peers informed on academic practices and policies; the prestige and authority of the UGC has, in various ways, been restricted and diminished; bureaucratic and political control of the universities has been increased, particularly by the transfer of ministerial responsibility from the Treasury to the DES and by the opening of university expenditure to the scrutiny of the C & AG and the Committee of Public Accounts. What has led to these circumstances, generally regarded by academics as not being in the best interest of either society or the universities?

CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LEAD TO ACCOUNTABILITY

It is of course obvious that in a democratic society the circumstances most likely to lead to accountability by its universities is their dependence on public money. In dictatorships the political views of the academics are an equally powerful predisposing condition. But it would be wrong to assume that in democratic societies dependence on public money is the only predisposing condition. There are, in fact, many such conditions today which, operating together, create a strong demand for accountability by the universities, indeed a demand for more and more accountability.

32 *The Guardian*, 10 Jan. 1970

Perhaps the most fundamental of these conditions resides in the much greater awareness of, and interest in, the universities themselves—and particularly in respect of their significance in modern society—that members of the general public now display. As the UGC observed in Gt. Britain: 'In earlier days if the man in the street was conscious of the universities at all it was as rather mysterious and remote places which were the preserve of a tiny minority to which he did not belong. So questions about their relation to the nation's life hardly arose. All that is now changed. The Public, the Press, Parliament, show a deep and almost daily concern not simply with student behaviour but with the place of the universities in discussion about skilled manpower, with the "Brain Drain", and with the proper adjustment of the provision of university places to student demand at the one end, and national needs at the other.'[33] Along with such a quickening of general awareness and appreciation of the significance of university education an increase in the demand for accountability is only to be expected.

A great deal of this public interest in the universities has come about through the fundamental concern of governments, in this century, with economic growth. Preoccupation with the increasing of the gross national product has led to the planning of social change and to a greater and greater dependence on the advancement of industrialisation requiring the application of science to technology. The immediate consequential effects on the universities have been two-fold so far as accountability is concerned. Education in general, and university education in particular, is now seen as a means of providing economic growth. Consequently it too must be managed and planned to provide in the most effective manner the scientific manpower and the technological innovation that economic growth demands. University education must account for itself in respect of these ends, and must be controlled and directed to them. Accordingly the social function of university education has been radically transformed.

A second consequential effect of the preoccupation with national economic growth is to be seen in the increased pressure

33 *University Development 1962-1967*, para. 560

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for university places and for the status of a university degree for courses of study previously followed outside a university. The outcome of these pressures is to increase the demand for accountability by the university. Thus, there is a growing criticism of university degrees considered to be 'dead end' in the sense that they are not 'useful' because they are not directly related to the earning of a livelihood in a specific way. Furthermore, as students with these views enter the university the demand for accountability will further increase. There are criticisms and complaints, too, from occupational groups outside the university which seek admission to it for the status and financial gains a university course is considered to bring. In this respect too there is, then, another source of demand for accountability by the university.

Still another reason for an increased pressure for university accountability has arisen from the tendency of governments to tidy up administration and to improve the organisation of resources and facilities from a national point of view. Remarking on this tendency in Gt. Britain the UGC there observed: 'It is perhaps not irrelevant also that throughout the national life there has been an increasing emphasis, in recent years, on organisation. It has taken many forms. But right through, from direct governmental planning to increased organisation of the leisure of the young people, this tendency has shown itself and has become part of the background against which the universities themselves operate. Both inside each university and among the universities as a family there has emerged a felt need for more conscious and deliberate planning, organisation and arrangement.'[34]

The rapid growth in the number of universities has also created circumstances calling for accountability. In Gt. Britain, for example, there are 42 universities, including the Colleges of Advanced Technology, whereas in 1960 there were 21, and prior to the war, only 16. In New Zealand where there are, relative to the population of the country, many universities, it may be asked if it would be proper for each university to proceed on its own way, making its own plans and providing for students accordingly, without regard to the offerings of sister institutions? Clearly some kind of overall planning and provision is necessary,

34 *University Development 1962-1967*, para. 561

whether this is done by the universities themselves or by government.

The circumstances cited above indicate then that while, in a democratic society, the dependence of the universities upon public money is an immediate source of accountability, there are much deeper and more fundamental sources of the demand for accountability. Perhaps the most fundamental of these has been the desire of governments to manage and promote national economic growth. Increased industrialisation and the consequent demand for an increase in scientific manpower and greater technological innovation have resulted. So too has the demand for university places, for 'useful' university courses, and for inclusion in the university by occupational groups seeking status thereby. With the increase in the number of universities overall planning becomes necessary. All these circumstances lead to accountability in some degree. Not only do they indicate that there are other sources of university accountability than dependence on public money but also that accountability in some form is here to stay; furthermore that the universities must seriously consider how, and in what form, they can live with it while continuing to fulfil what they consider to be their unique contributions to the achievement of a healthy advancing society. Since the universities see the threat of accountability as being the end of their academic freedom it must now be asked what the universities understand academic freedom to be.

WHAT IS ACADEMIC FREEDOM?

ONE OF THE REASONS why university opposition to accountability is misunderstood and not accepted outside the university comes from a failure to understand what academic freedom is and what it implies. Perhaps this should not be a cause of wonder since academic freedom is not a doctrine that was invented and promulgated for a particular purpose at a particular time, or formally adopted by universities. Rather has it grown up with the passage of time, out of the experience of the universities in defining and achieving their functions. Furthermore university academic staffs now number not a few who, not having been involved in the development of it, would be hard put to it to define academic

freedom adequately and, indeed, have given little if any thought to it. In the main such staff members have been recruited to provide for the newly developed, more specialised, vocational, industrial studies and have been selected by criteria narrower than usual; some of these may have relatively little interest in and knowledge of learning and culture outside their specific fields, and may not have fully absorbed the traditional institutional values of the university. Nor has the university as an institution established any system of inducting its new members of staff into the university staff and the traditional values of the society of university teachers. Accordingly there is not only misunderstanding and ignorance of the nature and implication of academic freedom outside the university but some, fortunately lesser, degree of it within the university. Indeed the universities have been negligent in educating their own members about academic freedom.

In coming to an understanding of what the universities mean by academic freedom it is perhaps best to begin by correcting a misunderstanding of it that is commonly held outside the universities, *viz.* that academic freedom consists in uncontrolled, irresponsible freedom. People who hold this belief do not usually go on to the view of the universities it commits them to as places of disordered confusion, if not downright anarchy, in which everyone does precisely as he wishes. The fact is, however, that the university is a community of scholars and novice scholars concerned with learning, teaching, and research; and, like all communities that set out to achieve specified purposes, it too has had to adopt rules and procedures by which the order that is required for the achievement of its purposes can be secured. Far from being anarchic the university is an orderly and governed community. The order and government, however, derive from the *consensus* of the university community, and consequently are achieved by a governing of academics by academics. This government by consensus is one of the basic principles on which the doctrine of academic freedom rests. It is important, therefore, to explore it a little further.

The academic structure of the university provides for government by consensus. Thus, within the university community scholars with similar academic interests group together for the consideration of their common interests. Within these groups,

or Faculties, new developments or changes to existing practices can be evaluated by academics with understandings independent of, yet close to, those of the proposers of those developments or changes. No university department, least of all an academic staff member of a department, can indulge in unilateral action and by-pass the Faculty concerned. No new development and no change of any significance can be made without the approval of the Faculty concerned. In the place of unfettered autonomy there is government by consensus.

Propositions that are accepted by the Faculties are then subjected to a second test of consensus. They are scrutinized by the professors of the university. Most of the professors will be members of Faculties other than that from which a particular proposal has come, but they will apply criteria generally, rather than specifically, related to the proposal. Here again the test of consensus of opinion is applied, and if the proposal is accepted it is sent for a third test of this nature to the university Council or supreme governing body of the university. Here, non-academic members join with academics in evaluating the proposal, but the non-academic members are people of active and distinguished engagement in research, education, industry, and the professions. If the proposal passes this test of consensus it must undergo yet a further similar one at the University Grants Committee. With certain exceptions this will mean, in New Zealand, being subject to the scrutiny of sister universities.

Here, then, is a form of government which clearly does not permit the wild exuberant excesses of autonomy that are not uncommonly thought to be inherent in academic freedom. On the contrary it is a form of government that provides for order and for a high degree of responsibility. Furthermore it can do this because it is government by *the consensus of the informed.* Academic values and academic policies are judged by those who are informed about them.

It is the freedom of the university to govern itself in respect of its academic policies and values that is the cardinal principle on which academic freedom rests. It is by the application of this cardinal principle in the everyday life of the university that one comes to identify the particular and essential components of academic freedom.

As the Robbins Report points out[35] the concept of academic freedom has two aspects, the individual and the institutional.

The academic freedom of the individual academic can not be entirely unfettered. He must be governed by the consensus of opinion within his academic community. Within those limits academic freedom will allow him to teach and to research according to his understanding of fact and truth, to publish his views and findings, and to share in the common making of policy by the means described above. However these freedoms do not allow him to contract out of the common policy he has had a share in making. Nor do they permit him to refuse a proper share of responsibility and of duties. Once again it is a qualified, but necessary, freedom within the limits of the consensus of the university community. Speaking of the academic freedom of the university teacher the Robbins Report declares: 'Freedom of this sort may sometimes lend itself to abuses. But the danger of such abuses is much less than the danger of trying to eliminate them by general restriction of individual liberty.'[36]

The components of academic freedom so far as the university, as an institution, is concerned are considered in the Robbins Report to be five-fold: freedom to select staff, to fix entrance requirements, to determine curricula and standards, to determine the balance between teaching and research, and to shape development.

The freedom of the university to select and appoint its staff, which is by no means universal, is nevertheless an essential component of academic freedom. Apart from the obvious risks of political interference the principle of the consensus of the academic community again applies. The suitability of an application is judged by representatives of the academic community with the assistance of referees from other academic communities.

The freedom of the universities conjointly to fix entrance standards and so to select students is essential if the quality of the universities is to be maintained. This does not give freedom to reject students on grounds such as race, religion, or politics, but only on grounds of academic suitability. Even in the most

35 *Higher Education*, Cmnd. 2154, HMSO, 1963, para. 704

36 *Ibid.*, para. 706

egalitarian society unequal abilities cannot be ignored if a university is to maintain its essential qualities and functions. Otherwise a university becomes in fact something intrinsically different.

Freedom to determine curricula and standards are a third consequent of academic freedom. Every university, and indeed every university department, should be free to develop its curricula and its own character within the consensus of the university community. On this freedom the Robbins Report states; 'We know of no argument that would justify the imposition of external control from the centre in this respect, though it is obviously essential that the universities should consider carefully any representations made to them for example, about the type of course best suited to various kinds of future teacher. Liberty to experiment with content and method is one of the surest guarantees of efficiency and discovery.'[37]

With standards of achievement too the university must have freedom to decide for itself. If, after careful study and evaluation of its standards it is satisfied, then it must resist sharp public criticism of failure or pass rates. With this freedom to determine standards must go, however, the responsibility to improve teaching practices where necessary.

The major functions of the university being teaching and research a balance between them must be struck. The freedom of the university to do this not only follows from much that has already been said but also from the fact that, in general, the university being the most intimately concerned in its own particular circumstances can make the best judgment. Admittedly in some countries university judgment in this respect has been bad, succumbing to strong external pressures from government and industry for research which has dwarfed teaching activity. As a result this has contributed to the development of student riots. In the main, however, it is true that the university is best able to determine the balance between its research and its teaching functions.

Finally the freedom of the university to shape its own development is a component of academic freedom which will be increasingly difficult to continue to secure recognition for outside

37 *Ibid.*, para. 712

the universities. It was over this aspect of academic freedom that the Robbins Report considered there would be the greatest difficulties. The circumstances described above as leading to the development of accountability—the need for scientific manpower, the multiplication of the universities, and the like—all predispose to the planning of the development of universities within a national scheme. And yet whilst stipulating the need for meeting national needs and providing a coherent system the Robbins Committee emphasized the importance of freedom of development for the universities. 'Undoubtedly it is good that academic institutions should have the liberty to determine their own programmes and policy. It is good that they should be free to make their own experiments and to develop the subjects most congenial to their leading spirits. All restraints upon such liberty that are not dictated by over-riding considerations of co-ordination and national needs are bad.'[38]

Academic freedom, then, is not licence. Governed by the consensus of academic opinion it is a freedom, within those limits, to select staff and students, to determine the nature and standards of what should be taught, to shape development and decide on research, and to determine the balance between teaching and research. Why it should continue to be so highly regarded by academics and believed by them to be so necessary to be preserved should now be considered in some detail.

WHY ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS IMPORTANT

The main justification for academic freedom is its indispensability for the full achievement of the purposes of the university. Admittedly this is difficult both to explain and to understand without assuming a high degree of familiarity with the functioning of a university. Whilst it will be readily agreed that the chief purposes of the university are teaching and research, that is to say the transmission and the advancement of knowledge, it is not always as readily understood that in a democracy the university has another role, one of unique importance. Since it is the only institution with the independence and freedom to allow it

38 *Ibid.*, para. 718

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to comment objectively on the affairs of society, rather than from narrow sectional interest, then its characteristic independence and freedom is of singular and critical importance to the health of that society. Whenever and wherever universities have been stopped from fulfilling this role, by the simple expedient of abolishing their academic freedom, the democratic nature of the society concerned and the quality of life in it have deteriorated. This, then, is the most general, and perhaps the most fundamental reason why a society should seek to preserve the academic freedom of its universities.

A more particular reason relates to the university's function in the transmission and advancement of knowledge. In the pursuit of these activities over the centuries the university has found that its achievement of them has been inadequate, restricted, and distorted when it has been deprived of academic freedom. Notorious examples spring to mind to show that where those qualities identified above as constituting the essential components of academic freedom have been displaced by external control and direction there has been suppression (as in the case of Galileo) and distortion (as in the case of Lysenko). Accordingly, if society is to benefit from what universities can achieve by their teaching and research it can do so only by giving them freedom to achieve their purpose.

Good teaching and fruitful research can come only when they are prosecuted, in the first place, for their own sake. Then they are followed for the primary purpose of the truth and insight to be gained; and, furthermore, their development is steered by those with the first hand knowledge from which alone can come the significant results. Teaching and research which give rise to such results are, generally speaking, creative in nature. No one can be effectively creative to order. External control and dictation, as is provided for in the aphorism that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune,' will certainly produce inferior results if not entirely defeat creativeness.

It might be thought that it is only the extreme forms of external control and direction, such as have been mentioned, that will cripple teaching and research in the university, but such is not the case. This becomes clear when it is realized that the teaching and study of subjects in a university differ in nature from the

teaching and study of subjects in other educational institutions. In the university subjects are not studied solely, or even primarily, for their use or immediate instrumental value. They are studied for their own inherent insights and understandings and, hence, in respect of their own nature. Accordingly concern with principles rather than procedures, with concepts rather than rules, characterises university study. So too does going beyond the collecting of facts to the interpreting of them, to formulating theories that will offer reasonable explanations of them, to developing from them hypotheses that can be tested in order further to advance knowledge in the area concerned. From study of such quality comes the capacity to consider data objectively, to reflect on them, and to reason fairly about them. In such ways university studies go beyond the production of competence and of experts to become a preparation for leadership. Unless studies are being followed in the way just described they are not being studied in the characteristic university manner. And, as the description of those ways implies, they can only be followed within the context of academic freedom. Perhaps the greatest difficulty those outside the university have in understanding the nature of, and the need for, academic freedom in the university arises from ignorance of the manner in which university teaching and research differs from that in other institutions.

Since education is one of the most powerful agents of social reform and control, educational institutions are a particular temptation to political leaders and social reformers. However social control is not the main purpose of education. If it is made the main purpose of university education the result will be successful neither in respect of that purpose nor in respect of the traditional purposes of the university. 'Nothing,' Lord Radcliffe recently stated, 'is more important at this stage of our social development than that academic freedom should be preserved. What then do I see as involved in academic freedom? I mean diversity instead of uniformity, liberty to swim against the tide. What I fear is the benevolent application of principles exactly the reverse, appropriate enough to the organization of a factory, inculcated by men who do not understand that in the pursuit of knowledge, the cultivation of the intellect, the art of teaching, the only certainly false doctrine is a belief in certainty. He who pays

the piper calls the tune and generally experience has shown that he had much better not.'[39]

A university bereft of academic freedom becomes a factory. It will certainly be able to continue to produce competent experts. It will not be able to produce the people of vision and of judgment without whom a society cannot be liberal and democratic.

THE NEW ZEALAND SITUATION

There can be little doubt that, more than ever before, the New Zealand universities are now coming under stronger demands for accountability and much nearer to external direction and control with a consequent diminution of academic freedom. The description given above of the course of events which has led the British universities into their present state of alarm over their jeopardized academic freedom has a familiar ring to New Zealand academics who are aware of, and understand the significance of, the trend of events here. Clearly New Zealand universities are already following along the early stretches of the same path.

The most recent indication of this has been the call, by the Controller and Auditor General, for the 'general publication' of the accounts of the universities and the UGC. In his 1970 Second Report[40] the C & AG points out that currently each university is required by statute to furnish audited statements of accounts to the Minister of Education and to the UGC. The UGC is required, as the C & AG put it, 'merely' to have its accounts audited by the Audit Office. Furthermore, although the UGC must report to Parliament on its operations and on each university institution, there is no statutory requirement that the report must include its own accounts or those of the universities. While the C & AG recognised that there are other statutory bodies in a similar exceptional category he considered that all of them 'are under close, often detailed, financial control by the parent departments which are themselves answerable to their Ministers and to Parliament through the procedures of financial allocation and estimates.' Citing the practice in Australia the C & AG

39 Quoted in Green, V. H. H., *The Universities*, Pelican, 1969, p. 343

40 AJHR B.1 [Pt. III], 1970, pp. 67-68

concluded: 'In the opinion of the Audit Office, New Zealand university institutions, including the Grants Committee, should be required to publish their accounts in the same manner.' The C & AG accordingly questions 'whether the autonomy of the Grants Committee and the universities should go as far as the omission of general publication of their accounts.'

Presumably the C & AG means, by the 'general publication' of university accounts, the laying of them on the table of the House of Representatives so that they could become public documents and be open to parliamentary debate. However in some, if not in all, universities the audited accounts already are public documents in the sense that, being laid before the university council in open meeting, they are available to the press for publication in the news media. Accordingly there is, currently, no bar to the discussion of financial expenditure by such a university. Questions about the accounts may be asked of a university and discussion of them can occur in the House and elsewhere.

No doubt the C & AG has the good intention of ensuring that value for public money is being obtained in university spending. It does not seem that he is yet asking for the same means for doing so as have been granted to his counterpart in Gt. Britain. But that would seem to be a very likely next step; and it would raise the problem that, as described above, has concerned British academics, viz, that value for university expenditure necessarily involves assessment in terms of *academic* needs and *academic* policy, terms in which a lay person would not ordinarily be sufficiently informed. At present the universities have the statutory authority to spend their money in the manner they consider will best promote the purposes of the University. Thus the Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961 states in clause 40: 'Subject to the provisions of this Act and any other Act and to the terms of any trust or endowment, the income and capital of the University shall be applied in doing whatever the Council thinks expedient in order that the University may best accomplish the purposes for which it is established.'[41]

Amongst the circumstances mentioned above as leading to

41 Victoria University of Wellington *Calendar*, 1970, p. 571

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accountability was the growing concern of governments with national economic growth and their consequent interest in university education as making an indispensable and important contribution to that growth. This has led to the planning of scientific manpower and of the technological innovation required for economic growth with consequential effects upon university education.

With the setting up of the National Development Conference (NDC) New Zealand is now moving in the same direction and, accordingly, an increased interest in and demand for university accountability and control is very likely. This seems clear from the terms of reference the NDC has given to its Committee on Education, Training, and Research. They include: 'the contribution to be made to economic, social, and cultural advancement by identifying, developing, and mobilising skills and abilities; the advantages to be gained from a flexible adjustment of education, training, and research to the changing structure and requirements of the economy and the community in general; the benefits and costs to the community of education, training, and research; and, in the field of education, paying particular attention to tertiary education and the role of institutions concerned, in conjunction with the secondary schools, in meeting the demands of employers and the community in general for people with particular skills and qualifications: to assess likely trends in the demand for education, training and retraining, and research services . . . . To indicate how effectively resources are being used and integrated for the foregoing purposes with a view to suggesting ways in which efficiency might be improved both in providing the personnel, facilities, and services and in applying results to the economy.'[42]

Without questioning the need for and the importance of a report on such matters academics cannot but be impressed by the possible use of its findings so to direct university education that it becomes nothing more than the handmaiden of national economic growth. The effects of such a corruption of university education, through the diminution of academic freedom, have

42 *Report of the Committee on Education, Training, and Research* to the National Development Conference, May, 1969, N.D.C. 12, p.5

been noted above. If not self-defeating such a policy will certainly not be the most productive in terms of the innovation needed for economic growth.

Perhaps the most notable and menacing indications of a growing demand for accountability, however, have come from the repeated public appraisals of university education made by the Minister of Finance (the Hon. Mr. R. D. Muldoon) chiefly in economic terms and by the principles of cost accounting. Dismayed at the mounting cost of university education the Minister has suggested the solution in terms of restricting the number of students allowed to enter the universities and of restricting the curricula of the universities. Universities supported by public money should be industry oriented. By this means value will be had for public money spent on them, and public money will not be 'wasted.'[43]

The growth in the number of universities is providing yet another source of demand for accountability and control. With more universities the greater is the need to avoid unnecessary duplication and, hence, the greater the need for organisation and control. Along with this goes, of course, the marked increase in Government grants to the universities. In 1928 such grants amounted to some £170,000[44] whereas, in the year ending March 1970 the grants had increased a hundred fold to over £17.5 million[45]. It is only to be expected that the astonishing magnitude of the growth of, and the public expenditure on, university education will lead to a demand for closer scrutiny of it.

These are some of the respects in which the shadows of accountability are lengthening over the universities, respects which have led, in the experience of the British universities, to a loss of autonomy and academic freedom. What should the universities be doing here if they wish to preserve that element of autonomy and academic freedom which is vital to the true quality of university functioning?

43 e.g., *Salient*, 12 July 1969, pp. 4-5; *Charisma*, 11 March 1969, pp. 1-5

44 Beaglehole, J. C., *The University of New Zealand: An Historical Study*, NZCER, Wellington, 1936, p. 347

45 *Second Report of the Controller and Auditor General*, 31 March 1970, AJHR B.1 [Pt. III], p. 67

In the first place New Zealand universities will have to educate their staffs so that they come to understand the significance of academic freedom in their work. The need for the induction of university staff has been made essential for several reasons. As universities develop the applied disciplines they inevitably appoint highly specialised staff interested almost entirely in the learning and culture of their own narrow field, and particularly in the instrumental uses of that field. Mobility of staff, which has greatly increased with the multiplication of university institutions, further distracts attention away from the institutional values of the university. Altogether then there is a pressing need for the university to induct its academic staff into the institutional values of the university.

Secondly, the universities must ensure that autonomy and academic freedom are kept alive, in a vigorous and flourishing condition, at grass root levels. If, as has just been claimed, academic staffs must be made aware of the significance of academic freedom, they must also be given the opportunity to experience it. With the growth of the universities, however, there is not only a grave danger that autonomy at the grass root levels will be rendered impossible but that it will not even be regarded as important. As the burden of administering the university grows so will there be a tendency for more and more of the decisions to be made by full-time administrators; and if this practice increases so the danger is likely to increase that participation in decision making is severely reduced, and government by consensus of the academics may consequently disappear. If that occurs in a university it can no longer expect society to accord it a viable measure of academic freedom.

Thirdly, the universities must educate the public regarding the nature of university education and the functioning of a university. The gross misunderstandings of university autonomy and of academic freedom the general public have make such a public relations programme imperative.

In the fourth place, universities must make every effort to retain the UGC in its present role. As has been made clear above the 'buffer' function of the UGC is of critical importance for the maintenance of academic freedom. Moreover, by the nature of its constitution it is specifically qualified to estimate the overall

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needs of university education, to evaluate the claimed needs of individual universities, and to report to Government on the extent to which value is being had from university expenditure. No existing agency is as well, let alone better, qualified to undertake these functions as is the UGC. To fulfil them effectively and to act adequately in the role of buffer, the UGC must, however, retain the confidence of both parties—government, and the universities. If the actions of the UGC cause the universities to believe it is no longer independent from political pressures they will not only lose confidence in it but will question its continued existence. They will strive then to find some other device which will guarantee the essential degree of academic freedom and autonomy; and it may grow out of the present Committee of Vice-Chancellors.

Fifthly, universities and their staffs must act in a responsible manner. They must spend their money wisely. They must be ready to have their accounts inspected and to answer questions about them so that there can be assurance that public money expended by the universities is being wisely used. This, however, will be distinct from direct or indirect control, and direction of the details of university expenditure. Universities, too, must continue to co-operate, as they now do through the UGC and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, so that wasteful duplication is avoided.

Sixthly, the universities must strive to ensure that the present system of government finance by block grants will in the main be continued. As its name implies the block grant is a lump sum which is made available without detailed conditions regarding its manner of expenditure. By contrast the earmarked grant is a sum specifically provided for a particular and clearly specified purpose on which alone it is to be spent. Though there are circumstances in which earmarked grants are necessary and proper, block grants create, in the words of Lord Robbins, 'a substantial insulation from irrelevant political intrusions and a considerable safeguard of the initiative and freedom of individual institutions.'[46]

46 Robbins, Lord, *The University in the Modern World*, Macmillan, London, 1966, p.35

Seventh, the universities must be cautious about new areas of academic development. Currently there is great pressure on the universities to engage in the teaching of vocational subjects and of technologies which are primarily instrumental in nature and which do not accord with the institutional values and qualities of university education. Other institutions of tertiary education are more fitted for such studies, but apparently are considered by status-seeking groups not to be so prestigous as universities. Nevertheless if those other institutions are adequately developed they will provide the most favourable circumstances in which the studies concerned can be further pursued. At the same time, however, universities must be ready, as they are now showing signs of being, to move into colleagual relationships with such institutions where appropriate. Diversity of provision for tertiary education will better meet the varied needs at the tertiary level than will the provision of a universal institution. Furthermore the extent to which the university is made to become such a universal source of tertiary education will be the extent to which it surrenders its unique and characteristic qualities, is diverted from its unique purpose, and loses its academic freedom.

Finally, the universities must insist that where they are evaluated the evaluation is made primarily in terms of *academic qualities*. It is with those qualities, and not with the instrumental ones, that the university is primarily concerned; and, hence, it is in terms of them that the evaluation of the university ought to be made. Sir James Mountford's observation is pertinent here: 'any subject taught in a university must have a definite and substantial content of fundamental knowledge, must be within an area where further advances in knowledge are possible, and must not be predominantly a training in skills and techniques. Any serious departure from those principles, no matter how great the outside pressure or how tempting the financial inducements, diverts a university from its more important functions and fritters away its energies.'[47] These are the criteria by which the university must be judged.

47 Mountford, Sir James, *British Universities*, OUP, London, 1966, p.56

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Academic freedom and university autonomy are indispensable to the well-being of a liberal democratic society. At the same time the university, as a part of such a society, must use its freedom and autonomy in a responsible manner. The problem becomes, then, one of mutual understanding, faith, and trust; each party must have understanding of, and faith and trust in, the other. What disturbs academics at the present time is the apparent lack of understanding of academic freedom with a consequent lack of faith and trust in the universities. The disastrous outcome of such a situation, should it persist, is well described in the Robbins Report: 'Freedom of institutions as well as individual freedom is an essential constituent of a free society and the tradition of academic freedom in this country has deep roots in the whole history of our people. We are convinced also that such freedom is a necessary condition of the highest efficiency and the proper progress of academic institutions, and that encroachments upon their liberty, in the supposed interests of greater efficiency, would in fact diminish their efficiency and stultify their development.'[48]

48 *Op.cit.*, para. 703